ecta Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Rightful Presence for Children with Disabilities

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- Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs
- Research vs. Attitudes/Beliefs
- Current landscape: Preschool Environments
- State Strategies for Moving the Needle

Re-released in November 2023

U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

POLICY STATEMENT ON INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Updated November 2023

Key Takeaways

- Children should receive EI/ECSE services in the setting they would attend if they did not have a disability.

- Ongoing research exists to demonstrate that high quality inclusion is beneficial to all.

- It is the law.

- Inclusion as measured by LRE has not changed remarkably in over 40 years.

- Access and supports for BIPOC children and families are highly variable and inequitable.

- High quality inclusion is achieved by an entire system working together.

- States and communities are finding creative ways to promote inclusion through financing strategies, public awareness, professional development and policy-making.

Inclusion Benefits....

- Children with disabilities
- Children without disabilities
- Educators
- Systems

Yet.... we still have issues with access and equity

https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/research.asp

Inclusion: Barriers and Challenges

Attitudes & Beliefs
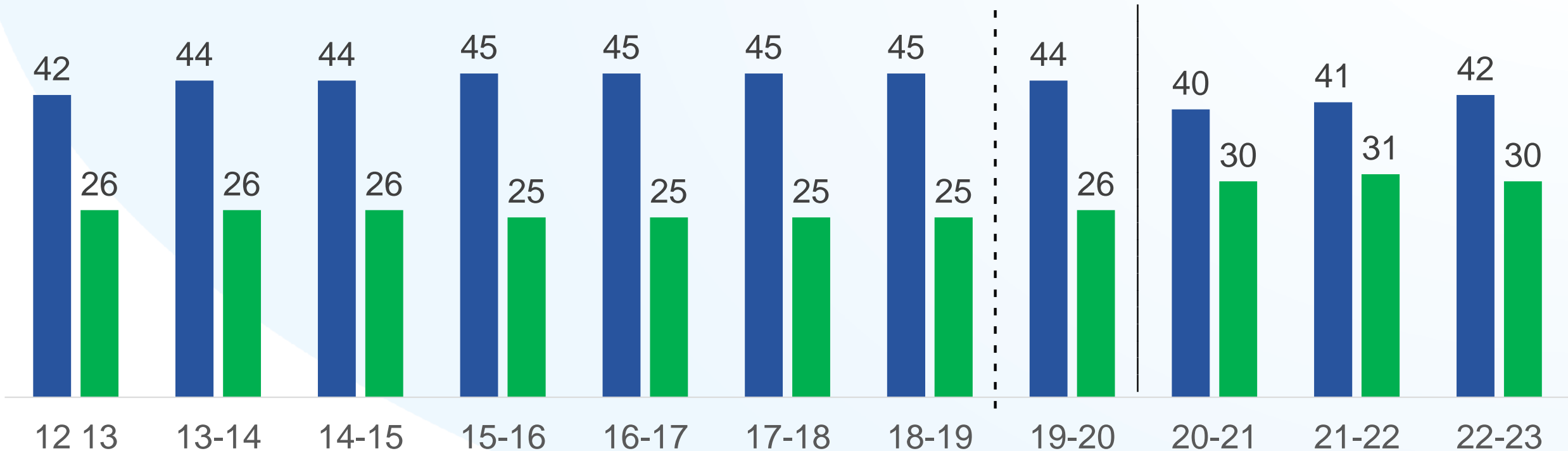Number one identified challenge to inclusion

Policies & Procedures
Of the nearly 70 responses related to "policy challenges", only 19 were likely to actually be policy

Resources
A key finding from research is that inclusive service delivery models do not cost more than separate programs

National Early Childhood Environments Data Over Time

Bar chart showing SPP/APR Indicator 6a (blue) and 6b (green) values by year:

Year	6a (blue)	6b (green)
12 13	42	26
13-14	44	26
14-15	44	26
15-16	45	25
16-17	45	25
17-18	45	25
18-19	45	25
19-20	44	26
20-21	40	30
21-22	41	31
22-23	42	30

SPP/APR Indicator 6a: Children attending a regular early childhood program (RECP) and receiving the majority of special education services in the program

SPP/APR Indicator 6b: Children who do not attend an RECP, who receive their special education services in a separate class, separate school or residential facility

State Environments for Children Attending a Regular EC Program and Receiving Majority of Services in the Program, 22-23

National Average: 42%
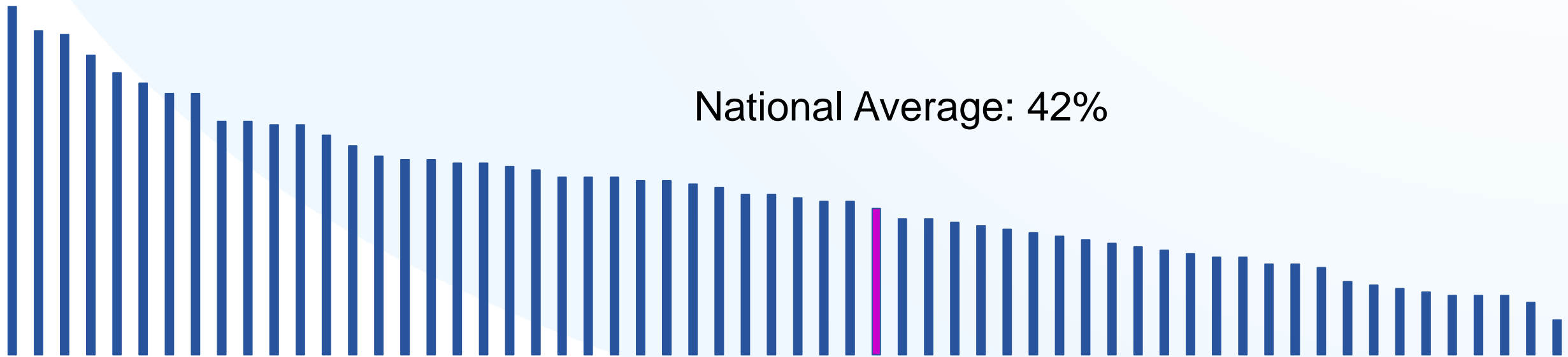
Each bar represents a state. Ed.gov Static Table:
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/static-tables/index.html

State-level Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion

Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion

These four sets of indicators were designed by a group of national partners to support state leaders, local administrators and front-line personnel in the early care and education system providing programs and services to children, ages birth through five and their families.

⭐ State Indicators

👥 Community Indicators

🏠 Local Program Indicators

♿ Early Care and Education Environment Indicators

📙 Glossary

"Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities, to those with the most significant disabilities."

— U.S. Departments of Health & Human Services and Education (2015). 📄 Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

INDICATOR S1: Cross-Sector Leadership ➕

INDICATOR S2: Policy/Guidance ➕

INDICATOR S3: Family Engagement ➕

INDICATOR S4: Accountability, Data Use and Continuous Quality Assurance Systems ➕

INDICATOR S5: Funding ➕

INDICATOR S6: State Early Learning Standards/Guidelines ➕

INDICATOR S7: Program Standards ➕

INDICATOR S8: Allocation of Resources to Support Personnel ➕

INDICATOR S9: Coordination of Professional Development Resources ➕

INDICATOR S10: EC Personnel Standards, Credentialing, Certification and Licensure Requirements ➕

INDICATOR S11: Preservice Education and Personnel Preparation ➕

INDICATOR S12: Public Awareness ➕

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